



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Santa Monica Mountains
National Recreation Area

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FACT SHEET: NEW VISITOR CENTER AT KING GILLETTE RANCH

GENERAL

- A new interagency visitor center will open in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area on June 9th at King Gillette Ranch, the historic heart of the Santa Monica Mountains.
- Under the terms of a cooperative management agreement, the Anthony C. Beilenson Interagency Visitor Center will be jointly managed by the National Park Service (NPS), California State Parks (CSP), Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). The surrounding parkland is managed by MRCA.
- Formerly a horse stable for the Gillette Mansion, the re-purposed building unifies the local, state, and federal parks for SMMNRA's 35 million annual visitors and is a national model for cooperation and efficiency.
- Few locations in California offer in one setting the opportunity to understand a cross-section of California's rich history, including sites that represent Native American settlement, Spanish missions and adobes, Mexican ranchos, California homesteading, and World War II military development.
- The new interagency visitor center replaces an existing NPS visitor center located outside the boundary in a poor-visibility area. That center will be closed to promote greater efficiency.
- Complimentary two-hour parking is available adjacent to the visitor center. A larger parking lot administered by the MRCA is nearby for a \$7 all-day permit.

HISTORY

- The prehistoric Native American Chumash village of Talopop covers the western portion of the site. Extensive archeological records are still present today for what is believed to be the largest interior Chumash settlement in California.
- King C. Gillette, the razor magnate, owned the ranch from 1925 to 1930 and commissioned Wallace Neff, considered "Architect of California's Golden Age," to design the estate.
- The stock market crash of 1929 wiped out Gillette's fortune and he was forced to sell in 1930.
- MGM movie director Clarence Brown (credits include "Anna Karenina," "National Velvet," and "The Yearling") owned the property from 1930 to 1952. The ranch was a frequent filming location, including the 1944 film "White Cliffs of Dover."
- After a series of different owners over the years, NPS, CSP, SMMC, and MRCA jointly acquired the property in 2005 for \$35 million.

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SUSTAINABILITY

- In alignment with the Department of Interior sustainability goals, the building is the first “net zero” visitor center in the National Park Service, producing all of its energy needs through a 95 kW photovoltaic solar energy system.
- The building is also expected to be the first National Park Service visitor center to achieve LEED Platinum certification for environmental sustainability. In addition to assessing the environmental impacts of construction and design choices, the designation also accounts for daily operations such as lighting, audio-visual equipment, and computer monitors.

COST

- The project received \$9.5 million in construction funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. MRCA and SMMC contributed financial and in-kind resources to the project as well, including a land donation for the visitor center site.
- NPS, CSP, SMMC, and MRCA jointly acquired the full 588 acres of the King Gillette Ranch site for \$35 million in 2005.
- The visitor center promotes government efficiency by co-locating local, state, and national park operating resources under one roof.

NATURAL RESOURCES

- The property hosts the largest concentration of the recently described Malibu baccharis (*baccharis malibuensis*). There are less than 10 known locations of this species, all within the Santa Monica Mountains.
- There are a number of scenic, sensitive plant communities on site, including southern oak woodland, oak savanna, coastal sage scrub, and riparian woodlands. Scientists estimate up to 85% of pre-European coastal sage scrub habitat in California has been lost to urban and agricultural encroachment. Similarly, valley oak savanna and riparian habitat have been reduced to a fraction of their pre-European extent.
- Two “blue-line streams” (streams that run all or most of the year and are marked on topographical maps with a solid blue line) cross the property, and combined with some 400 acres of diverse habitat, the site provides for increased habitat linkage and wildlife movement for the region’s mountain lions, bobcats, and coyotes.